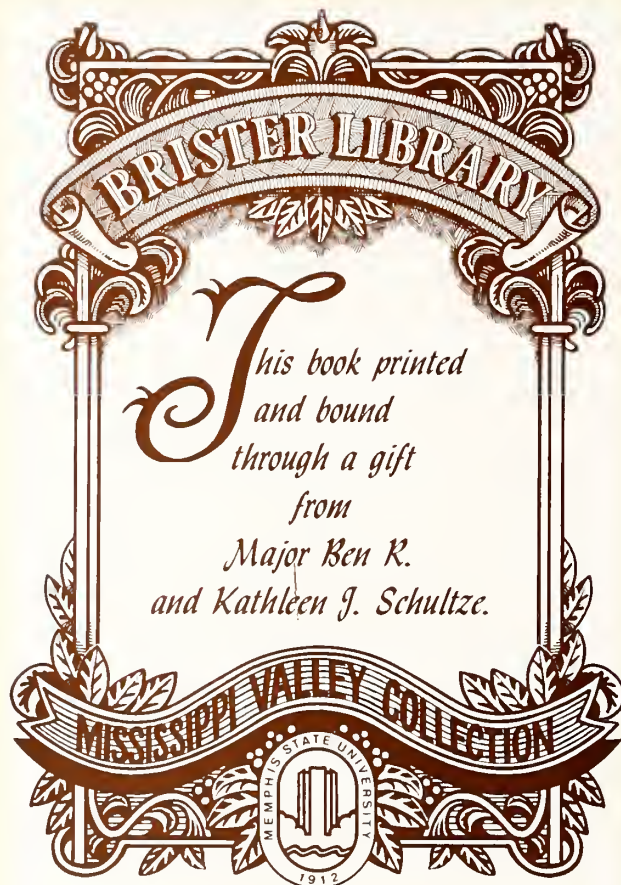


AN ORAL HISTORY OF THE WINFIELD DUNN ADMINISTRATION
INTERVIEWS WITH
JOE HOPPER

BY - CHARLES W. CRAWFORD
TRANSCRIBER - SUZANNE ACUFF
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AN ORAL HISTORY OF THE WINFIELD DUNN ADMINISTRATION

INTERVIEWS WITH JOE HOPPER


MAY 14, 1975

BY CHARLES W. CRAWFORD

TRANSCRIBER - SUZANNE ACUFF

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MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY



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Lopper

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PLACE Nashville, Tenn.

DATE May 14, 1975

Joe N. Lopper
(Interviewee)

Charles W. Crawford
(For the Mississippi Valley Archives
of the John Willard Brister Library
of Memphis State University)

THIS IS THE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE OF MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY. THIS PROJECT IS "AN ORAL HISTORY OF WINFIELD DUNN GUBERNATORIAL CAMPAIGN." THE DATE IS MAY 14, 1975. THE PLACE IS NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE AND THE INTERVIEW IS WITH MR. JOE N. HOPPER. THE INTERVIEW IS BY DR. CHARLES W. CRAWFORD, DIRECTOR OF THE MEMPHIS STATE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE. TRANSCRIBED BY SUZANNE ACUFF. INTERVIEW #1.

DR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Hopper, I suggest we start with some background biographical information about you.

We can start now at the beginning and continue through the date of your first association with Winfield Dunn.

MR. HOPPER: Dr. Crawford, I was born in 1930 in Henderson County, Tennessee in a little town known as Sardis, Tennessee, a rural area of the county. Born of rural farm parents, I commenced school in the Sardis Elementary School in 1936 and completed high school in Sardis in 1948. In 1948 I commenced work at Brown Shoe Company in Savannah, Tennessee awaiting my call to the service, which did not come until 1951, because of an automobile accident in which I suffered extensive injuries and didn't recover properly until some months after the wreck. That was in late '48 I believe, and I left from Lexington, Tennessee, to go into the U.S. Infantry May 15, 1951.

I returned to Henderson County in May of 1953, and during the summer of 1953 commenced college at Freed-Hardeman College in Henderson. In

December of that year, I married Mary Lou Bridges, also of Sardis, Tennessee, and we continued to live in the Henderson area until 1955, at which time I completed my college work there and a summer session at Union University in Jackson, Tennessee. I was pursuing a pre-law course and in the summer of '55, I still lacked 15 quarter-hours being eligible to enter law school. I then transferred to Clarksville, Tennessee, and attended Austin Peay State University for one quarter and completed that quarter in December of 1955.

I was going to school on the GI Bill--funds other than the funds from that bill were extremely limited--and I commenced law school at Cumberland University at Lebanon, Tennessee in January of 1956. I completed my course there in March of 1958. During that time I had numerous part-time jobs including pipeline work, work in a motel, bellhop, various jobs on the farm, etc. to make expenses to feed and pay tuition to get through school--I had a wife and one daughter at that time. My daughter was born on July 28, 1955.

I completed law school and went to work with Tennessee Adjustment Company in Nashville, Tennessee, and was transferred to Chattanooga in the summer of '58 and lived in Chattanooga approximately six months, at which time I returned to Nashville, Tennessee, to work with the USF&G Insurance Company. In 1959, on September 2, our second daughter was born here in Nashville, Tennessee. Their names are Vicki Hopper and Jeannie Hopper.

In 1960, about March, I received a call from Joe Appleby, an attorney in Lexington, Tennessee, and asked if I was interested in being appointed

Assistant United States Attorney in Memphis. At that time Joe was a very active member of the Tennessee Bar, very active member of the Republican Party. He had been considered for the position of U.S. District Attorney in the Memphis office, and was not appointed and in my opinion had the great input into who would be appointed as the assistant when Warner Hodges, then an assistant, moved up to the top spot in the Attorney General's office.

On July 12, 1960, I was sworn in as Assistant U.S. District Attorney in the District Court in Memphis, Tennessee, and served in that capacity until February of 1962, at which time I was replaced as a result of the Kennedy Administration, and my close ties with the Republican Party.

It must have been during that time between '60 and '62 that I first met Winfield Dunn. If my memory serves me correctly, it must have been '62 when Winfield Dunn made his first venture into politics, running for the legislature against Charles O'Brien, for one of the East Memphis seats. In that year, the Republican party fielded a full slate, or practically a full slate to oppose the Democrat incumbents. It being the first real push and real venture and the real challenge to the Democrat Party the Republicans were all pretty soundly defeated in all fields. However, the showing was great enough that it gave many of us, and I'm sure including Winfield Dunn, great heart that a two-party system in Shelby County and in Tennessee was probably on the horizon.

I believe it was about 1958 when a group of people, one of whom was Governor Dunn, commenced a movement in Shelby County to unify and branch out and build a viable Republican Party. And I wasn't there when the

real initial effort started. After his 1962 venture into politics, our association became closer, although it was more or less a fellow Republican association, I didn't live in the part of town that he lived in, did not have much active contact with him on a day-to-day basis. It must have been 1964 when he was Chairman of the Republican Party in Shelby County and was so active in the promotion of its growth that I had one occasion one evening to make a trip with him to Lexington, Tennessee, my home town, to speak to a group of Young Republicans. That gave me about four or five hours visitation time with him and to discuss principles, policies, and philosophies and to get to know the man better.

I think as I looked back, the thing that attracted my attention about Winfield Dunn more than anything was his personality and his attitude toward openness, fair play, and honesty and integrity in his dealings. As he grew in the party and as he became better known and as it was apparent that his charm and charisma were just two very contagious assets of his life, I could see that he had great potential to do many things even broader than helping build a Republican Party. In my opinion, this was one of his goals to be an integral part of building a two-party system. But when you know and work with a man on a day-to-day basis, you come to realize that he was thinking so much greater, as to a much greater, broader spectrum than just building a party. He was working toward building a greater state, to offer people [of] no political persuasion, an opportunity to join together and to accomplish things that would be truly worthwhile to the

tax-paying citizens of Tennessee, to the youth, and to the yet unborn generations. His thinking goes that far. And to be a party man is just probably the minor thing about Winfield Dunn. Do you want me to continue?

DR. CRAWFORD: Let's go from there, Mr. Hopper. Do you know why Winfield Dunn decided to do this through the Republican Party? Did he have a Republican background at that point?

MR. HOPPER: At the time he announced in May of 1970 that he was going to be a candidate, of course, he had very good Republican credentials. Having served in leadership capacities within the party, of course, he came from a family background of Democrats. But I think his somewhat conservative views and its philosophy had strayed too far from the people, and that with the Republican credentials he had plus the fact that he had an appeal to the independent voter to make the race as a Republican was the only logical thing to do--I don't think he would have prostituted his former workings within the party to have run on any other ticket. But even greater than that I think he realized that he could appeal to a much broader scope from the Republican platform than as a Democrat.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you know why at an earlier date he decided to work within the Republican Party since he had a Democratic background and Tennessee was controlled by the Democratic Party?

MR. HOPPER: Here again, to know Winfield Dunn, I think is to realize that here is a man more concerned with principle and what's right than with any party label. I don't know

why he renounced the Democrat label, having to come to marry and live in Tennessee where it was predominantly Democratic, but I think here again he felt that the philosophy he could offer as a Republican and with the credentials he had within the party would cause the independent voter to stop and look and listen to what he had to say. And that if they heard what he had to say, they'd realize that here is a new approach to state government. Here is a man who truly wants to do something for the state of Tennessee and who really stands above the party label.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you know when Winfield Dunn first started believing that it might be possible to capture the governor's office for the party? You know precedent had been against it for half a century.

MR. HOPPER: I don't know, but I'd guess that it had been at the back of his mind for a long time that the people of Tennessee would be open-minded and receptive to a change in philosophy, a change in politics if the right person came along with the right philosophy. In my opinion, this began to materialize in a very positive manner in early 1970 and perhaps late 1969. And I think as he traveled around over the state and as he came in personal contact with people, from various walks of life, and from his moving around from one geographical area to another, he could see that people had an interest in him as an individual and in the philosophy that he espoused. And I think that if you looked at him and listened to him and more especially if you looked him in the eye, you could see he is a man who has the determination to stand for what he thinks is right regardless of the odds, regardless of

the political consequences it might cost him. And I've seen him stand in those situations where he might not go with the popular side, but he'd go with the side that he'd believed, based on the best evidence he could acquire, was the best stand for the people concerned.

DR. CRAWFORD: Quite a change occurred in the Republican Party in the '60's for it to be able to carry Shelby County. Though Shelby Countians had a habit of supporting presidents in the Republican Party, the Democratic Party had been dominant there for so long. Why do you feel this change took place?

MR. HOPPER: I really feel that a lot of people had more or less voted the convictions of their forefathers.

I was born and reared in Henderson County, one of the very few and the staunchest Republican county west of Knoxville. And I am about a fifth or sixth generation Republican from that county. And all too often perhaps too many of us vote a forefather's philosophy. And I think this has been happening in the Memphis area. Of course, Memphis being the "hub" of the Mid-South, it had people from Mississippi and Arkansas and other outlying areas, and likewise [was] predominantly Democratic. And, I think it commenced to dawn on people in the mid-sixties that, "you know, I gotta vote for what's best for the next generation, for my childrø, not from what my grandparents thought." Times have changed philosophies have changed, customs, traditions and the like. And I think people in the mid-sixties perhaps in that area, commenced to think more independent. And when they did I think that's when they saw Winfield Dunn.

DR. CRAWFORD: He was certainly there at a fortunate time.

What year was it that you went to Shelby County?

MR. HOPPER: Nineteen-sixty.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was the structure of the Republican Party there at the time? Was Millsaps Fitzhugh still active?

MR. HOPPER: Millsaps Fitzhugh was very active, and in my opinion the influence of Millsaps Fitzhugh was the influence that caused Warner Hodges to become District Attorney in that district over Joe Appleby from Lexington. I think Millsaps had a great deal of impact with the national chairman of the Republican Party at that time and perhaps had his ear a little bit more than anyone else in the Memphis area.

DR. CRAWFORD: About that time the Republican Party was quite small.

MR. HOPPER: The Republican Party was perhaps unified but too small to make any impact.

DR. CRAWFORD: In fact, I would think of it, mainly as a patronage dispensing organization and was really not large enough to win elections. So it seems to me that you had a major change in the party between this period and 1970 when Winfield Dunn could be a serious candidate. What part did he have in that change?

MR. HOPPER: In my opinion, the part that Winfield Dunn played in that [the change], along with others who shared his philosophy and unlike their predecessors in power, believed in an "open door" policy: Don't hold the party so small that we can control it, but make it large enough so everybody who wishes to share with us can

truly be a part of it. I think that is the prime source in Winfield Dunn's success in politics and in the success of the building of the Republican Party--not only in Memphis, but in other areas across the state. There were those in the Republican Party who unfortunately didn't want the Republican Party to grow and be a viable force because if it got too big, they'd lose the power they had in the party. They wouldn't be 'the man to see.' They wouldn't receive the accolades of success in their area. But the thing that I give credit to causing the Republican Party to surge was the attitude that Winfield Dunn had through expression and through action. He had that attitude that there shouldn't be a man to see. All of us are in this thing together. All of us are important in our respective roles because we are all citizens and are all taxpayers, and as a team we can win, but as a fragment we're going to always lose. And I think his influence in getting that point across is the prime reason that we grew in that area. I'll tell you another reason, Dr. Crawford, Winfield Dunn wasn't a man who sat back in a white castle somewhere and sent out orders. I've seen him and worked with him in Shelby County Courthouse when he and Betty Dunn, Harry Wellford and other people all sat down together and rolled up our sleeves and brought the voter registration books up to date, and this to me is a commendable thing on the part of a man who later came to be governor, but whose philosophy never changed--and it hasn't changed yet. He'd go back and do the same thing if he could be of help. I guess by this time you've discovered that I'm a little biased toward the man. You see those day-to-day activities, and there are people

who couldn't believe that a man could possess the integrity day in and day out, on television or in a private meeting. It's all the same-- there's no change in him.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now what year would you say this change took place if you had to select a single date? I know it's a slow process.

MR. HOPPER: It must have been '66 or '68 when we commenced to elect members of the legislature from Shelby County. It was after the rebuilding after the '64 catastrophe with the Goldwater campaign. I know by '68 there was a very strong force, I'd say '66 was the first time we elected representatives, I believe that's right, I might be wrong.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember when Winfield Dunn was first elected to a party position in the county?

MR. HOPPER: I think it was '64, as Chairman, and of course he had worked in other lesser capacities I'm sure. But, it became pretty obvious early in the game, 'here's a leader with the right attitude.' His attitude as a party chairman before it reached out into the community to those nonaligned people, was such that this carried through his administration. He didn't have to ask you to work long hours. He could approach it in such a way that you felt that it was your own idea. He could get the most work out of the most people because he wasn't looking for the credit himself, he just had a way as chairman that drew Republicans close together. And I think he instilled

in all of us the idea that, 'we can win, if we have the right attitude and we go out and preach this in our communities.' I was precinct captain at the time in the Bartlett area I guess when he was chairman. [He was] an easy fellow to talk to, ready to be of help, gave sound ideas, just a true leader.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you think the fact that he had a profession, which was apart from politics, gave him a certain amount of strength and integrity in this? That is, in that there was nothing that he could hope to gain from politics himself, in his own profession?

MR. HOPPER: Perhaps it did. I've heard him refer his profession in some of his speeches during his campaign that because of his profession it gave him an insight into humanity. He was dealing with people in the medical sense, where he could be a service to them in that particular area. And he believed that he had an understanding of humanity. Well, being the unique individual that he is, his profession allowed him to come in contact with people and to render service to people, and to earn a good living, and things like that. And I think that, coupled with an ingrained integrity, just caused him to say every day, 'I don't have to be dishonest to make a living.' I think he perhaps felt that he could fall back on this profession if need be.

DR. CRAWFORD: He was in a good position I think. It is possible for people to suspect that such professions as law and business do offer connections with politics which could be profitable, as you know. But in this case, I can't see any way

that anyone could suspect any such connection.

MR. HOPPER: Well, I don't think there would logically be the connection that there would be if he had been a contractor or a banker or the like, but the thing that was and still is the most refreshing thing to me, I'm convinced that regardless of what background he had and what business he had become associated with, he never let that co-mingle with his position as a public official. I'm sure that he has declined to participate in business fields that would have no connection with state government, simply because a finger could have been pointed by the suspecting party.

DR. CRAWFORD: You mentioned that the party needed to be re-built in Shelby County after the Goldwater campaign in '64. How do you mean it needed rebuilding, Mr. Hopper? I would think that normally that helped build the numerical membership of the party in that campaign.

MR. HOPPER: It probably did. The thing that I really was thinking about more--that was a crushing defeat in '64. I think the morale really needed the rebuilding, perhaps more than the party structure. The votes, I'm sure, picked up that year. But it was a crushing blow to the morale of the people who had been active in, maybe not as much as rebuilding, but building of the party prior to that time. Perhaps the spirit and the morale of the people needed rebuilding, more than the party itself.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you think the Goldwater candidacy itself

attracted many people into the Republican Party?

MR. HOPPER: I think the Republican Party profited from that, and understand when I speak of the crushing defeat of '64 with Goldwater, I was perhaps [one of] his most staunch supporters. I believed in him, I shared that strong, conservative view with him, and I still admire him as one of the most outstanding senators in the United States. I think in that area because of many of the rural people that live in Memphis that Goldwater's candidacy offered an opportunity to those people to step out of the Democrat ranks and support the true conservative philosophy, and that the end result of the Goldwater campaign had been profitable to that area.

DR. CRAWFORD: In terms of rebuilding the party after '64, what did Winfield Dunn concentrate on?

MR. HOPPER: Well, I think he continued to concentrate on the same thing that he had in the past, and that is to preach the word of open door policy, perhaps. But getting down to the more detailed things that he seemed to concentrate on, was building a good ward-precinct organization. I believe that in Shelby County, they had at one time and I hope still have, one of the finest ward and precinct organizations I've ever seen. And the way they do it they take a map, divide up the streets. The precinct captain had so many--the workers under him--those workers would take so many streets, and they would have meetings to keep updated and see how many

houses they have called on and what the response has been, just a continuation of that sort of thing until virtually all of Memphis and Shelby County had been covered. The interest and the enthusiasm grew. And if you get people out to meetings, more especially during Winfield Dunn's tenure as chairman, it just inspired them and they'd go back home and tell their neighbors. And I think he was very instrumental in setting off a chain reaction of enthusiasm among the people, many of whom had been Republicans and many who had not been Republicans.

DR. CRAWFORD: I think the vote totals bear that out very well in the county. In the history of the party in Tennessee, the strength of the Republican Party had been mainly in East Tennessee--about the first couple of congressional districts as a rule, with some support in the cities, and a few rural West Tennessee counties in the hill district just beyond the river. He made a real change it seems to me in developing a strong center--the second center of the Republican Party--in the far west, in Shelby County so that you had east and west to combine together for the vote totals in 1970. Does that seem to be correct to you?

MR. HOPPER: Yes. I think various things contributed to that. The man himself projected better than any man in politics I've ever seen. The reaction of those with whom he came in contact was more favorable than any candidate I've ever seen. The philosophy that he spoke of coincided with many people's philosophies. You combine the man and the philosophy, his straightforwardness, his openness, plus the fact that it just seems to me that Tennessee was kind of stagnated, politically, and many people consciously and subconsciously,

I think, were looking for an opportunity or a reason to make a change in their voting habits. In 1970 with all the pluses that Winfield Dunn had, the pluses of the philosophy that he had, things like that; I think John Hooker was a fine candidate for the Republican Party to oppose because he didn't carry the respect in his [Democratic] party that Winfield Dunn carried in his party. He didn't carry the respect of his immediate area of Nashville that Winfield Dunn carried in his hometown of Memphis. He didn't gain the favor, he didn't enthuse people who were nonaligned politically in the same favorable manner that Winfield Dunn did. [It was a] combination of a number of things. It was just a good year to change the philosophy of a lot of people and to change the formation of the map, politically speaking, of Tennessee.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, it certainly did. Now there had been a time in the past when the black vote had been important in the Republican Party, then there had been a change through a relatively small lily-white faction, and of course the party broadened greatly during the '60's. Was there any consideration or any attempt to win back part of the black vote in the '60's expansion?

MR. HOPPER: There was not a great attempt to win it back except with the same philosophy that he espoused to the white people in Tennessee. He said the same thing in the West that he did in the East, and the same thing in the Middle that he did in the other two sections, the same thing to the whites as he did to the blacks. And he offered them an opportunity to become a part of the new movement of the new philosophy. Unlike many past campaigns,

he didn't slip down into the black neighborhoods at night and see what he'd take from the man to get the vote. He did it very straightforward, very above board, and if they wanted to read about what he believed in, they were welcome to literature, if they wanted to hear him, he'd be glad to speak to them. There were no efforts made to my knowledge to try to court the black vote other than through the same media and the same efforts made to attract any other voter.

DR. CRAWFORD: As I'm sure you know that had been a rather customary way of seeking the black vote, to go to certain leaders and talk about payments and endorsements.

MR. HOPPER: That's right. Campaign expenses that would be necessary to get workers and so forth, at least under that auspices.

DR. CRAWFORD: So it seems to me that by 1970 he had built a Republican Party with two centers of strength in the state, which in that year with that matching of candidates, was sufficient to offset the heavy Democratic support in Middle Tennessee.

MR. HOPPER: Well, the first and second district--and to a very great--well, the third had pretty well held to its traditional Republican vote. With that we were always a force to contend with, but not one viable enough to win. No question, the Republican Party has for many years had to be coped with, you might say, when they were strong candidates running in the Democrat primary. But we had to take second best, and that's whatever could be traded out

from the Democrats. But with the party that was built in Shelby County, this really made a very viable force between East and West and strong enough that when they joined hands Middle Tennessee, with its Democrat counties, just couldn't cope with it.

DR. CRAWFORD: I remember the inaugural ball in January 1971, heavily attended by people from West and East Tennessee [and] a rather small representation from Middle [Tennessee].

MR. HOPPER: Not quite as many. It was a new day, certainly, for the West Tennesseans. That enthusiasm continued on through the four years of his administration. It was a new dawn for many of us in West Tennessee, who had never seen victory except on a national level or in our respective counties--that was very seldom in any county other than Wayne and Henderson and years past Carroll, and 50/50 in McNairy, occasionally in Chester. At that time it had been nonexistent in Madison County where he won by several hundred votes in the general election.

DR. CRAWFORD: For the primary campaign, when did you become involved in it? At that point, what did you do?

MR. HOPPER: Well, at about May, I guess it was, he came to Nashville and announced that he would be a candidate for Governor. I went home that afternoon--he had been my dentist and my wife's dentist for a while. My wife said, "Did you hear what Winfield Dunn did today?" I said, "What?" She said, "He

announced for Governor." I said, "Well, he's a force to contend with, but he'll probably have to make two races." But I'd vote for him if he didn't get but one vote regardless of what he wants to do, I'm for him--I think I know him that well.

I was at that time general counsel for Continental Oil Company in the Memphis office. Carolyn Weins was his scheduling secretary, I believe, but in addition to that, Carolyn had a lot of knack for politics and a sensitive air to those sorts of things, and was interested in politics. She'd call me a number of times to help identify people in various West Tennessee counties where I was born and reared, who might be helpful in Windfield's campaign. I became more involved in the campaign as it went along. And I'd go in in the afternoons after I'd get off work and work until bedtime or go home and eat supper and come back and work a while and go out in the afternoons and get literature and stakes and get somebody to work with me and at night. We'd put them up in the various subdivisions. I traveled with him one or two days, I recall, during the primary--Chester, Henderson, and Carroll County area.

DR. CRAWFORD: How was he traveling at that time?

MR. HOPPER: Well, he was traveling any way he could.

Pretty close to hitchhiking. Funds were not all that plentiful, he [was] just becoming known, and Rufus Powell was driving him most of the time in a borrowed car. And I'll never forget, we were riding along one morning going to Chester County, and he said, "Joe, where do you think I stand in this race?"

I said, "I think you're in third place." This was three weeks and two days, as I recall, before the primary election.

And he said, "Who do you think is first?"

[I said] "I think Maxey Jarman has taken over the lead over Bill Jenkins, and I think you're in third place, Claude Robertson in a close fourth place, and Patty lost as he has been for twenty yaars, perhaps in these races. He won't make a figure, but the other four of you will receive some votes."

And he said, "Do you really think I'm in third place?"

I said, "I don't think there is a question about it, you're in third place. But you haven't been there too long, you were neck-and-neck, in my opinion with Claude Robertson and the other two were certainly better known statewide than you were. Now I have no doubt in my mind but what you'll be the nominee. I think what'll happen--you got Bill Jenkins, the Speaker of the House, a very clean individual I hear." I didn't know Bill at that time and I came to love and respect and admire him so much after we came to be members of the cabinet. I said, "Bill has a fine reputation, but his money's running out. Yours is picking up. Maxey Jarman has got a lot of money, but his stamina is giving way. And your youth is coming on. In my opinion, you'll pass both of them in about ten days to two weeks."

DR. CRAWFORD: How far before the election was that?

MR. HOPPER: Three weeks. Three weeks and two days I remember. And I said, "I've never seen timing that I thought was more pertinent than yours. There's never been a day where you've slipped back. And it's a question of whether or not

your momentum will give way. If it doesn't I think you'll peak. I don't think you'll ever peak, I think your greatest strength will be at Election Day." And it worked out that it was. And I'd go with him places and I've seen this happen. [He would] shake hands with campaign managers for our opponents and just melt them, because when that man looks you in the eye, it's hard to say, "no." I learned that when he asked me to come to Nashville. I didn't have any great ambition to come to Nashville.

DR. CRAWFORD: You were not surprised, then, at the outcome?

MR. HOPPER: No, I wasn't after we got into it. I didn't think that when he first announced. I doubted that he could beat Bill Jenkins or Maxey Jarman, or whichever one the people settled on the day before the election. But after the momentum picked up, and after we got within a month of the primary day, I felt very confident, very confident. Because everywhere you would go and everybody you would talk to, those who were for him were very enthusiastically for him. There wasn't anyone who wasn't opposed to him. There were just some who lined up with other candidates. I never met anybody who said they didn't like Winfield Dunn, or they're not going to vote for him because of his nasty attitude. One of the things that he neutralized was oppositions. I could recall one incident so very vividly. I perhaps should not mention the names, but two of Maxey Jarman's campaign managers--I watched them listen to Winfield Dunn one morning. I went around to them and said, "Now what have you got to say about that?"

They said, "You can't beat him in the county." And they didn't. And I'm confident that on that day Winfield Dunn was in third place in that county. He won by a very comfortable margin come Election Day.

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INTERVIEW #2.

DR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Hopper, let's look at the campaign year
1970 a little more. You sensed a steady
development of momentum in the Winfield Dunn primary campaign. Why do
you think that happened?

MR. HOPPER: Because primarily of his exposure to more
people. As I said in the other interview,
he had that certain something, which most of us classify as charm and
charisma and sincerity, that made people comfortable when he was around.
And I think that is primarily the reason for the commencement for his
groundswell of 1970. Of course, he was always in my opinion, in good
shape in Shelby County, where he had known and worked with people in
the capacity of a businessman, a professional man, a party worker, a
party leader and so forth, but he hadn't had the necessary exposure
statewide, and I think when he got that, thence when the groundswells

commenced.

DR. CRAWFORD: What were your duties during the primary campaign?

MR. HOPPER: During the primary campaign, I had no specified duties. I would devote what time I could to his office doing whatever needed to be done, maybe calls to various people that I knew, maybe help in trying to organize something in each county, maybe putting out literature or various things. I had no designated duties during the primary because I was working full time with Continental Oil Company, and that to a great extent impaired my extensive work in the primary campaign.

DR. CRAWFORD: Of course he had to rely largely on volunteer and part-time workers in his campaign. Of what you observed of the campaign staff, which people do you think were particularly effective in their contribution?

MR. HOPPER: There were so many many people that were very effective in their contributions that I think you'd have to classify in-office help and out-of-office help. There are so many from Shelby County where it all started that contributed so much to it. Betty Davis was, I guess, in charge of the Shelby County office. Betty devoted long and strenuous hours, both in the primary and in the general election. And in addition to her there were a host of volunteer women who would come in and help her there in the office, and fellows who would do things that needed to be done on the

outside.

You know there are so many little things like getting stakes together, stapling on the pictures, distribution of material, running errands and so forth. But pretty soon after the office opened it was my observation that once you came to do something for Winfield Dunn, you wanted to come back. If you happened to come in contact with him and didn't know him before I'd imagine what a shock that would be, because he's always so overly and unnecessarily grateful for anything you do for him. And he always let you know that. And through that attitude he inspired a lot of volunteer work that otherwise might not have been acquired.

DR. CRAWFORD: What about the advertising in the primary campaign? How was that handled?

MR. HOPPER: I'm not sure. I couldn't speak on that because I didn't participate in the fund-raising nor the acquisition of materials or the firm that worked with him.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were you doing primarily precinct work at that time?

MR. HOPPER: Precinct and headquarters work. At that time I believe I was precinct captain in the Raleigh-Bartlett area of Memphis and Shelby County, and I would either work in the precincts after working hours or I would work in headquarters.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did you try to do in the Raleigh-Bartlett precinct?

MR. HOPPER: I tried to establish the same sort of organization in that area that was so well known in other parts of Shelby County, and that is set up a good ward and street effort where every house in a given area would be covered either with a phone call or with a personal call by someone interested in the campaign distributing material or personal solicitation of the votes, distribution of yard signs, things of that nature.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you have plenty of material? You had no problems about what you needed to use in the precinct?

MR. HOPPER: In the primary we had adequate, not an abundance. Money wasn't that plentiful. And it would be my guess, the bulk of the contributions came from Shelby County.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where were you on primary election night?

MR. HOPPER: Winfield Dunn's headquarters.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember what happened then?

MR. HOPPER: I certainly do. Harry Wellford was seated in the back room as results would come in from other parts of the state. Harry has a very fine political mind, and can look at the geographical setup and the vote that's coming in and can pick up a trend early. I think he's one of the finest men that I know who worked with us in politics. He had that certain something much like Winfield Dunn, appreciative of what you did, a keen political

mind, and Harry, after he saw the scattering results coming in from across the state predicted that when it hit Shelby County he'd win it big. And we won it not too big, but big enough.

DR. CRAWFORD: Harry, as I suppose you know, is on the Tennessee Historical Commission with me.

MR. HOPPER: I did not know that.

DR. CRAWFORD: As a result of Governor's appointment, of course.

MR. HOPPER: He's a fine individual.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, his contribution here was obvious. Where did Winfield Dunn get best support in the primary?

MR. HOPPER: What general area of the state?

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes. Outside of Shelby County, of course.

MR. HOPPER: Outside of Shelby. Well of course, I suppose number-wise he came through better in the First District. Of course he didn't win in the First District, he had three men from that general area--two of them from that general area, and one from--well, he had one from the immediate area, one from the Second District, and one from Nashville. So the two men from the First and Second District got most of it. But numberwise, I suppose that being the heaviest Republican area in the state traditionally, it probably got more votes there.

DR. CRAWFORD: At what time did it become apparent that he was winning?

MR. HOPPER:

Well, there was so much jubilation and so much I guess you'd say confidence, I just never believed when he announced that he was going to be elected the first round. But it seems to me that it must have been about 9:00 when it was apparent that he was a victor. And then from that night on, of course, you had some tired soldiers after that long and grueling campaign. And as I remember he carried 92% of Shelby County. A phenomenal figure. And of course in getting that many votes it didn't just happen. There had to be a lot of work done. And there was a lot of work done, and you had some tired people. But it just seemed that the wear and tear didn't show on him after the primary that much. They commenced the next day, so to speak, to hold together what we had and to build to it. One thing that in my opinion helped Winfield Dunn so very much again goes back to his characteristics. I'm confident he held no malice toward any opponent in the campaign. He conducted himself during the primary in such a manner that he didn't have to make apologies to anybody when it was over. But as soon as the primary was over, and it was determined that he had won, he called his opponents and said, "I need you so bad," or that in effect, "I can't win without you. Would you come to my aid?" And I think, you know you say a lot of times, well, the party saw an opportunity to do thus and so, well, I think a lot of credit goes to the man, more especially in this case, big enough, strong enough, gracious enough to call the fellows that he had fought for three months, and say, "We're friends, we've always been

friends, we just all wanted to be the nominee. But none of us could win without the others helping." And I think that's the thing that brought the unity that we needed from the other candidates and they all pitched in and to my knowledge every one of them made a very vital contribution.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you know how soon these calls were made?

MR. HOPPER: No, I don't, but I'd say no later than the next day. I'd say the calls were at least placed the next day, the next morning. Very shortly after it was over. He didn't wait for anybody to have an opportunity to say, "Well, he didn't call me." He may have made some of them that night, I'm not sure.

DR. CRAWFORD: What about the headquarters staff? When did you shift gears for the general campaign as it started out?

MR. HOPPER: Within a very few days. The primary was in August, wasn't it? Well, probably the 15th to the 22nd--in that range, I'd say. From the second or the third week in August. The third week, maybe, because I started getting calls at work and at home late August asking me if I would take off from my job to be coordinator of West Tennessee. It was one of those things, I felt, like I was caught in a bind because I was very interested in his campaign, at the same time I had eight years seniority built with Continental Oil Company, and an obligation to two daughters. We had bought a home in Memphis and were pretty well situated and I didn't

want to disrupt my tenure there without the consent of the company.

And I approached the company concerning this. And I think Harry Wellford called Keith Blend, the chief attorney in New York, and asked to release me on a leave of absence to work in the general election. Anyway, on the 8th of September I commenced work full-time on the road as West Tennessee Coordinator. I didn't really do a lot in the Eighth District, in fact I did very little. The districts have been changed since that time, but we're speaking of the old Eighth District that goes up to Dyersburg, Tiptonville area. And I remember I went up to Benton County, and two or three more--Henry County, a couple more in the Eighth District. But a lot of work was concentrated primarily in the Seventh District, and I think the reason for it was--I was born and reared in the heart of the old Seventh District. I knew a few people in that area and had the rural background that most of the voters in that entire district had. I went into each one of these counties and tried to establish an organization and establish the people rapport with the people who would be working with the campaign--tried to instill in their minds that I'd be working with them, but they would have to carry the burden of making major decisions on county organization and structure within the ranks because they knew and understood their area and their people better. And I may be a bit egotistical, but I think we gained good rapport in that effort and I felt like we had a relationship where I could call any other counties when I needed to and they were very receptive and very willing to do anything they could for Winfield Dunn.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you set up an organization in each of the counties?

MR. HOPPER: Yes, we did. In each of the counties we had campaign chairmen and more or less other appointees that the county people felt they needed--a treasurer, fundraiser, committees for women's activities or appearances of Winfield when he'd be going through the area, social committees and the like. But by and large, each county pretty well determined what they wanted to do in their county.

And I felt that it was my job to try to make sure that we did have the proper activity going and enthusiasm going and to keep in contact with them and help them with literature when they needed it and answer questions when they needed, go visit with them when they had meetings or wanted me to. And I tried to be available during those almost eight weeks. I guess it was eight weeks, from September until the election on the 4th or 5th of November. But I traveled many miles in that area, and I think made about every crossroad. They're some of the greatest people in the world.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you try to get to all the towns in each county?

MR. HOPPER; I tried to make every one of them. Every one. I spoke in some of the towns when he couldn't and I've always thought that second or third best when you fill in for the candidate. But there were times he couldn't be every-

where and those of us in the field tried to fill in when we could.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were you on salary or expense account at that time?

MR. HOPPER: Well, one of those things I was on expense account. I think I spent two nights on the road. The rest of the time I'd stay at the farm, hold down expenses and still be at home occasionally. I was not on salary as an arrangement. I had a very set feeling about taking money from the campaign. I never did do that and I had some qualms about it and I would not do it and did not do it. I did not take a dime out of the campaign on salary. On the expense account, and of course that was made up of meals, and as I remember, two or three nights on the road was all I spent out, but I was out on the road about every night. But it usually would be where I'd end up either somewhere within a reasonable range of Memphis or within a reasonable range of Henderson County, so I didn't stay.

DR. CRAWFORD: You were fortunate to have two points where you could stay.

MR. HOPPER: That's right.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, one way of measuring success, I suppose, is in terms of organization you had that by the time the campaign was over. How about the vote totals from the Seventh District?

MR. HOPPER: I was extremely pleased with the outcome of the Seventh District. I had hoped and worked toward--very hard--making the Seventh District a victory district for

the governor. But two years prior to this we had a hundred and twenty thousand votes in the Seventh District, under different circumstances, different candidates, more the George Wallace influence, a congressional race. But in that race, the Democrats won by a margin of 80,000 to 40,000, 2 to 1. This time we had slightly over 127,000 to vote, and I don't remember the exact vote, but it was 63,000 for Dunn and about 64,500--or 64,600--for John Hooker. There was about a 1,600 vote spread out of 127,00 districts. I felt exceptionally good about that. But I had done a week-to-week prognosis on that district, and with the help of the old-timers who had watched the counties for many, many years it was amazing how close we came in some counties. For instance, Giles County, we missed it by 32 votes. Other counties we missed less than 100. And then there'd be a couple of real surprises both ways. But I was extremely proud of the vote he got in that district. We almost split it.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's quite a victory considering the background.

MR. HOPPER: Very, very great victory, because bearing in mind you had counties like Henderson and

Wayne that had been staunchly Republican over the years. Carroll had occasionally been Republican. Then you had some very strong counties like Giles and Lawrence and Decatur. Chester that had been strong Democrat or 50-50 in some cases like Decatur County and Carroll County. The influence of the Democratic Party in that district had been very

favorable toward the Democrats in past years.

DR. CRAWFORD: As you got toward the close of the campaign, did you feel that there was a chance to carry the district?

MR. HOPPER: I felt so confident of it that about a week before the election I went back through every county. I said, I just know that we're so close, so close that I just feel it from traveling extensively in the district, that if every county would push for 50 to 100 more votes over on our side we can carry it. And I think everybody made a good honest effort. And the margin that we lost by was really victory for us because any time you hold it to a 50-50, that's very favorable to the Republicans in that district. You see, Ray Blanton, the present Governor, had been in that district for three terms I guess, going into his third term perhaps, and he had won every race he ever run. He beat Tom Murray by a very small margin--maybe 500 or 600 votes. But he came on to beat Julius Hurst by another small margin, then he came on to beat John Williams in '68, and he just never had lost an election. And his influence was to be coped with to a certain extent in the district.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, you were in one where it was very successful to hold the line, simply.

MR. HOPPER: I think that was the main thing, and some of the counties where it wasn't popular to go in and say 'I'm a Republican for Winfield Dunn,' or even, 'I'm for

Winfield Dunn.' But he portrayed such an image and such a strong sense of character and integrity and all the good things you hope for and seldom see in the many races that you just didn't mind walking in and saying, 'I'm for Winfield Dunn because...' and give your reasons. And you really didn't worry about who thought what about you for being for Winfield Dunn. And I think that's the type of support he engendered by his presence with people. And by the time we got to the general elections the momentum was going strong and there was a lot of fight in our people. First they said, "Maybe we can't carry this district." I said, "Maybe there's no reason why we can't if we worked." And a lot of fight was built up in them before the election until I'd say, the week before, it was just nip and tuck and slug it out. Everybody--the Democrats--were scared. They saw that he was a power to be reckoned with and that his workers were loyal and devoted, and they wouldn't give in.

DR. CRAWFORD: On the other side of this, do you get any impression that the people were against the Democratic candidate, John J. Hooker as well as for Winfield Dunn?

MR. HOPPER: Very definitely. That was a factor in the campaign. As I pointed out in the earlier interview, there were certain pluses on his side like his ability to mix and mingle and persuade people. And then on the other hand, you had some pluses in Winfield Dunn's favor that were actually minuses. On the Democrat side, John Hooker, in my opinion, didn't have that

appeal because of various reasons. Number one, he hadn't succeeded in the business venture that he had undertaken just recently. In fact, it had been a miserable flop. And that caused people to stop and think. Number two, do we want a man who is a proven failure in business? That coupled with the fact that our only other alternative is Winfield Dunn because the race had been narrowed now. So John Hooker was definitely a detriment to the Democrat Party.

DR. CRAWFORD: It could have been a more difficult fight with another candidate.

MR. HOPPER: Much more.

DR. CRAWFORD: But of course you deal with the candidate who's really there and not who might be.

MR. HOPPER: Right. I think you had a candidate that espoused a Tennessee view with a record of success behind him he would have been a much more viable candidate.

I wouldn't want to admit that any candidate could have defeated Winfield Dunn, but it would have been a closer race.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, I'm sure of that. What about financial support for the counties, did you expect them to raise their own funds or were they helped from headquarters?

MR. HOPPER: We expected every county to raise the funds that they needed to defray the expenses of their programs, whatever that might be. Plus we asked them to send in certain amounts--we set quotas, as I recall--by county and hoped that

they would be able to meet these, but we didn't use the 'pressure machine' on them. We just said it'd be good if you could help to this extent. I think the Governor's approach, and I know my approach, is that you get more out of people by working with them, telling them the truth and being honest with them than you do by trying to coerce and pressure them. And I think in that campaign we saw a very positive piece of proof that's true--those counties responded very well.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did they generally meet their suggested quotas?

MR. HOPPER: As I remember, they did.

DR. CRAWFORD: What about advertising, did you supply materials?

MR. HOPPER: We did supply materials for the most part, but there may have been a couple of counties where they printed their own material, but that was pretty well allocated out of state headquarters as I remember--based on population.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were the counties in your district able to get advertising space? They had no trouble finding billboards and newspapers and so forth?

MR. HOPPER: So far as I know, and I didn't work with that directly, but it appeared that there was no problem in acquiring space.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did your county organizations have any difficulty of any kind? Was there any opposition that made it hard for them?

MR. HOPPER: You mean within the ranks, outside?

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, either I suppose.

MR. HOPPER: Well, bearing in mind we had a Republican Party without a governor for fifty years, and there were a lot of old-timers who could remember the last governor and yearned for another one, and wanted to be a moving part of this campaign. Of course, being human, there were instances where there was some friction that I recall or no misunderstandings that were not resolved. Of course as the campaign wore on more contributions came much faster to headquarters, and more especially when it became apparent that he did have a 50-50 chance of winning. And we were able to do more things in the way of radio and television, newspapers, and in that respect supplement the contributions of the county organization by billboards. But I was very well pleased with the efforts within the party and the relative lack of friction between its members. But they usually joined hands when an outside force challenged. I don't remember a county where our organization was disrupted by outside forces.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you have any suspicion that there would be vote fraud or any problems at the polls?

MR. HOPPER: I don't think that I had any great suspicion. I just felt like probably there were areas where there was a greater need to be cautious than in other areas. For instance, in the Covington area, there had been Election Day problems in the past, I felt like that was one area that there should be some overview, to make sure votes were counted as they were cast, but I don't

think we had any problem in that respect. I didn't anticipate any.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you arrange for poll-watchers at each place?

MR. HOPPER: Most county organizations arranged for that. We discussed it with them and it was down-played more than up-played. We just felt that somebody should be there to present a visible presence of someone interested in fair elections.

DR. CRAWFORD: Um-hum.

MR. HOPPER: I don't recall any instances that gave rise to the belief that there might be vote fraud.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were you able to get any newspaper support in the counties?

MR. HOPPER: Yes, I know in the Seventh District we got quite a bit of newspaper support as I remember. We got some in McNairy and Henderson and Carroll, Wayne; we got some in Lawrence and Chester, I believe. And as far as I know we had no problems with the insertion of material in the paper. Sometimes that's a problem.

DR. CRAWFORD: When the election was over, what sort of records or files did you keep for the Seventh District?

MR. HOPPER: I kept a list of, or the book on all the campaign chairmen, the principal contributors, the active workers, the primary chairmen, which in most instances, was

the same as in the general election, the vote totals in the primary and the general, and the votes of Senator Brock who ran the same year and was done on a county-by-county basis.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you have any coordination with the Brock campaign at the same time?

MR. HOPPER: Yes, we had a great deal of overlapping, I knew the boys who worked in his campaign and we had very good rapport and I think a pretty good coordinated campaign. Of course those assigned to one campaign or the other concentrated more of his time to that particular campaign. But I think where possible we all contributed what we could to the other campaign.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did the two candidates run comparatively in the Seventh District, Senator Brock and Governor Dunn?

MR. HOPPER: The Seventh District--well I wish I had those figures--Dunn ran a little stronger than Brock, as I remember, in most counties. I don't recall the vote total for Senator Brock in that district.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you change the issues in any way in your part of the campaign from the primary to the General Election?

MR. HOPPER: Well of course, I think the issues had to be expanded some. The first appeal was, who was the best candidate to pit against the Democrats in November. I think

that we can talk about schools, highways, and this, that and the other, but assuming you have a field of candidates, I always felt that they're all qualified. Which one will best do the battle with the opposition? And I think the scope of the issues were broadened, more things were discussed--the needs for expansion in our school system, the vocational educational program, the highway program. Mental health was one of the things, corrections, the prison system was a concern to Governor Dunn, drugs were of concern to him, he always had a compassionate feeling toward those families with problems brought to bear on them by outside forces. I think that was a great concern and all of those things were discussed at the general election.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where were you on general election night in November of 1970?

MR. HOPPER: Well, on general election night here again we all assembled in the Republican headquarters on Poplar--where was it--anyway, wherever the Republican headquarters was. Memphis was the last place that he made. He started in Nashville. I believe he went to East Tennessee and came through Nashville and on to Memphis, and he must have gotten to Memphis around 2 o'clock in the morning.

And I know my two daughters were there, and they had handed out much literature and made a lot of house calls and really had their heart in the campaign. They wanted to stay until Winfield came and celebrate the victory. And I'll never forget, I told them, that would be a historical moment in their lives and they wouldn't have to go to school the next day. And they stayed up about all night and slept all

day the next day. And he came in about 2 o'clock in the morning that night. That was one of the wildest crowds I've ever seen because everybody had given a lot and he'd given a lot more than any of us. It was just the culmination of a lot of hard work that turned out our way. A great victory!

DR. CRAWFORD: Now, after that was over, of course you had an interim before he was inaugurated. What happened after that?

MR. HOPPER: I went back to work the next day.

DR. CRAWFORD: For Continental Oil?

MR. HOPPER: For Continental Oil Company in Memphis. I felt very good about the past two month's work. [I] didn't have politicing in my blood much, wanted to get back to my job. I know my wife said to me, "Do you think the Governor will offer you a job in Nashville?" I said, "I don't know, I hope not, because with eight years here and vacation time built up, pension time built up, profit sharing and all, I think, I best stay in Memphis where we own our home and have our children in school."

Of course, being the guy that he is, he took a lot of time after the election to call a lot of people to thank them for what they had done and he called me and thanked me. It must have been within a couple of days after the election. About three weeks wore on and one night Betty Davis called me at home on a Sunday night and said, "Winfield Dunn would like to see you in his office in the morning."

Well, this must have been the latter part of November, and he asked me if I could go part-time to Nashville to work in the transition. And I agreed to go one or two days a week from December to the middle of January when he was inaugurated, to try and help do something to get the transition made. And the company was very gracious at that time to give me a day or two a week off, and I'd usually come up and stay about two days, go back home.

And he asked me one morning, he said, "How long would it take you to get to Nashville?" And I said, "For what?" And he said, "To be on my staff." That really pleased me but shocked me because I wasn't expecting that.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember when that was?

MR. HOPPER: It must have been in early December, I'd guess.

And, I really mulled that over for a week.

And you know it's one of those things that's once in a lifetime to have an opportunity to serve on the staff with the Governor. It's perhaps less than once in a lifetime to have the occasion to serve with a man of his caliber. And after mulling over it for about a week, I decided that that was the only opportunity I'd ever have like that. So I came on up here with him full-time the middle of January, and my family moved up then in the first of July.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you get a leave of absence or did you leave Continental Oil?

MR. HOPPER: I had a one year leave of absence. I felt

like when I left that would be good insurance because I wasn't that sure about what all this job would entail and I thought I was mature enough in politics to realize that any day I could make a boo-boo to where the governor would have pressure brought upon him to move me out. I tried to realize that. And told the governor that I realized that those things could happen and I wanted him to know on the front end that when my usefulness had been served I wanted to leave.

But it worked out great and it was a real experience to get into a new administration and more especially when you have not been in state government. I've been in federal government for a couple of years, but no likeness to state government. And of course the Republicans hadn't been in for 50 years. My job as administrative assistant coupled several things together but the main thing was patronage, and of course that drew people from all corners of the state. The first fourteen months were just about too much to cope with. I'd usually come to work about 6:30 or 7:00 and try to catch up on some correspondence and then go home around maybe 8:00 or 9:00, work on it a couple of hours after I got home. But those first fourteen months I spent a lot of time working here in the daytime and traveling at night to different places to speak. I don't think I caught on for a couple of years that that'd get the best of you, and I slowed down after that.

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